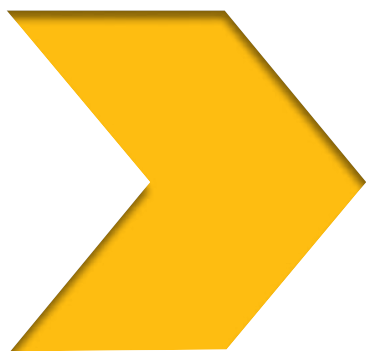


Health & Safety at Work



Prevention Starts Here

Worker Health and
Safety Awareness
in 4 Steps

This workbook belongs to:

.....

Introduction

This workbook explains your rights and responsibilities on the job and tells you what Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) expects from your employer, your supervisor and you. These are things you need to know and understand so that you can be safe at work today and every day.

Everyone in the workplace, from the employer to the newest worker, has different but important duties to keep the workplace safe. Because employers have the most authority in the workplace, they have the greatest responsibility but it's important for your own safety that you understand everyone's health and safety duties, including yours.

Preventing injuries and illnesses at work starts here, with the things you learn in this workbook, but it doesn't end here. **One of your employer's duties under the OHSA is to give you specific information and instructions about how to stay safe on your job. What you learn from this program will help you start to understand those instructions.** We hope you will use what you learn here every day of your working life.

Step 1: Get On Board

Everyone has a role in safety

A new job is a chance for a fresh start. You're learning new skills and meeting new people. But every job has hazards, no matter how safe it looks.

The number of people in Ontario who suffer a work-related illness or injury each year would fill the seats of a dozen big hockey arenas.

From the list below, who do you think is more likely to get hurt or sick on the job? Check one of the boxes and explain why.

1. New and young workers

Why? _____

2. Experienced workers

Why? _____

The right answer is #1. Studies show that new and young workers in Ontario are four times more likely to get hurt during their first month on the job than at any other time.

That's because they often aren't told about or don't understand the hazards of the job. They don't know what to expect from their employer, their supervisor, and of themselves. Sometimes they aren't sure what questions to ask. Sometimes they don't even know who to ask.

That's where the law comes in.

How the Occupational Health and Safety Act works

The OHSA is a set of laws that spells out the duties of employers, supervisors and the rights and duties of workers. There are also different Regulations that are attached to the OHSA. They contain more detailed laws about how to make the workplace safe in specific situations. For example, several Regulations explain what is needed to work safely with chemicals and other hazardous materials. This includes training, warning labels on products and information sheets. There are also Regulations for different types of workplaces, such as construction projects, health care facilities, industrial establishments and mines.

The whole point of the OHSA and Regulations is to keep workers from getting hurt or sick on the job. There are inspectors from the Ministry of Labour who make sure the laws are followed and may issue orders or lay charges if they aren't. If a person is convicted of breaking the law, there are penalties such as fines or time in prison.

The OHSA gives everyone in the workplace duties. These duties are connected to the level of authority each person has in the workplace. To sort out all the duties in a workplace, the OHSA breaks them down to three main levels of authority:

1. the employer (who is in charge of everyone)
2. the supervisor
3. the worker (you).

To which of these three people do you think the OHSA gives the most duties? Check one of the boxes below and explain why.

1. The employer

Why? _____

2. The supervisor

Why? _____

3. The worker

Why? _____

The right answer is #1 – the employer. The more authority a person has in the workplace, the more health and safety duties they have.

It's important for your safety that you understand everyone's health and safety duties.

Duties of the employer

Here are some of the things the OHSA says every employer has to do as part of their job:

1. Make sure workers know about hazards and dangers in the workplace and how to work safely.
2. Make sure every supervisor knows how to take care of health and safety on the job.
3. Create health and safety policies and procedures for the workplace.
4. Make sure everyone knows and follows the health and safety procedures.
5. Make sure workers wear and use the right protective equipment.
6. Do everything reasonable to keep workers from getting hurt or sick on the job.

Rights of the worker

Your employer has the responsibility to make the workplace as safe as possible and to tell you about any hazards in the work you do. Your supervisor has the same duty. They also have to make sure you know how to avoid those dangers and work safely. **You have the right under the OSHA to be told about the hazards in the work you do and to be instructed on how to do your work safely.**

If someone asks you to do work that you don't know enough about, your employer and supervisor are responsible for making sure you know how to do the work safely. That's why you have the right to speak up and ask questions – even if you are shy or unsure. People can get hurt on the job if they don't have the right information and training.

You should never have to be worried that you will get in trouble for asking questions or reporting a problem. **It's against the law for your employer or your supervisor to punish you in any way for doing what the OSHA says or for asking your employer or supervisor to do what the OSHA expects them to do.** This is called a "reprisal." It's even against the law for your supervisor or employer to *threaten* to punish or fire you for doing these things.

You also have a right to refuse to do unsafe work if you have reason to believe it puts you or a fellow worker in danger. We will look at this right and your protection from reprisals in more detail later.

Prevention starts here, but it doesn't end here.

Step 2: Get in the Know

You need to know about hazards

Some people say that what you don't know can't hurt you. That's not true at work. On some jobs, what you don't know can kill you. **A hazard is anything in the workplace that could hurt you or the people you work with.**

All of us have heard about a worker or group of workers who were killed on the job. We have heard of workers falling from heights, getting caught in equipment or being electrocuted and burned. Events like these send a shock wave through the workplace and the community, and it is a tragic loss for the victim's family and friends. Unfortunately, this kind of event happens not once or twice but *dozens of times* each year in Ontario.

There is a hazard at the root of every work-related death, injury or sickness. A hazard can take many forms. Sometimes more than one hazard can combine to make an even bigger hazard. **You need to know about the hazards in your workplace *before you start working.***

Think about the people you know. Do you know someone who has been hurt or killed at work? What was the hazard at the root of it? How did it affect you? How did it affect their family? Make some notes about your story in the space below.

Some common workplace hazards

Here are some of the most common hazards in Ontario workplaces:

1. **Repeating the same movements over and over, especially if you are in an awkward position or you use a lot of force.** Think of someone who bends down all day, or someone who lifts heavy things over and over again, especially above the shoulders or below the knees.
2. **Slipping, tripping or falling.** Think of something as simple as spilled coffee on the floor, a cluttered work area, or a raised platform with no guardrails.
3. **Working near motorized vehicles.** Think of being hit by a dump truck that is backing up on a construction site... or someone getting hit by a forklift truck in a warehouse or on a loading dock.

4. **Using or working near machinery.** Over the years, many workers have been killed or seriously injured by the equipment they operated.
5. **Workplace violence.** It can happen in many workplaces such as to a gas station attendant working alone at night, or to a health care worker or a home care worker in those settings.

Can you think of any other common workplace hazards – especially ones in your own job? Here are a couple of possible examples. Try to list a few others.

1. Loud noise
2. No lighting
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

You also need to think about less visible hazards related to your work – things like chemicals, fumes, and toxic dust. Or germs and viruses in labs and healthcare workplaces. Some of these hazards can make you very sick. Sometimes they make you sick right away; other times you don't know that you are sick until months or even years later. That's why it's important to know about these hazards now.

It's the **employer's duty** to make sure that the supervisor knows enough and has enough experience and training to keep workers safe and healthy while they work.

It's the **employer's and supervisor's duty** to inform workers of health and safety hazards.

It's the **worker's duty** to report hazards they know of to the supervisor or employer as soon as possible so they can fix it.

Employers, supervisors and workers work together to make the workplace safer.

Here are four important questions about your job that you need to know the answers to. If you don't know, ask your supervisor:

- What are the hazards of this job?
- Is there any special training needed for this job?
- Do I have the right protective equipment for this job?
- If I have any questions about safety, who do I ask?

Can you think of any other health and safety questions you should ask? Here are a couple of examples. Try to list a few others.

- How do I report an injury?
- What do I do in an emergency?
- _____
- _____
- _____

Protecting you from hazards

There are many ways that your employer can protect you from workplace hazards.

The best way is to get rid of or eliminate the hazard completely. A good example is replacing a toxic cleaning chemical with one that is non-toxic.

If the hazard can't be eliminated, your employer can try to reduce the hazard. This can be done by reducing how much of the hazard you are exposed to. An example of this is turning up the ventilation system in a factory, or putting a barrier around a dangerous piece of equipment. These are called "engineering controls."

Another way to reduce hazards is to reduce how long or how often you come in contact with the hazard. This can be done by arranging the work differently so that you are not exposed as long. These are called "administrative or work practice controls."

If the hazard still exists after trying to control it through elimination, engineering controls and administrative or work practice controls, your employer may require you to use protective equipment and/or protective devices.

Protective equipment and devices

The OSHA says that one of your duties as a worker is always to wear or use the protective equipment that your employer requires.

You may think that a hardhat, safety glasses, steel-toed boots or some other protective clothing or equipment are uncomfortable or slow you down. But if the OSHA or your employer says you have to wear or use these things to do the work, you have to.

Some of the machinery in your workplace may have a guard. The guard protects you from coming in contact with a moving part. If your employer or one of the OHS Regulations says that the guard has to be used, it has to be used. **The OSHA says that you must never remove or disable any protective device that is required.** If the device has to come off for any reason, you should not use the equipment without a replacement device. Taking shortcuts by removing guards is unsafe – and it's against the law.

The OSHA says you have to make sure you don't use any equipment or machine in a way that could hurt you or any other worker. You also can't act or behave in a way that could hurt you or anyone else. That means no playing games, pranks or acting in other ways that could hurt someone.

Other ways to find out about hazards

There are other ways you can find out about hazards in your workplace. Your employer may have some of the workplace health and safety procedures in writing. These procedures are about the work you do and the machines and equipment you use. Your employer has to make sure that you know and understand them when you start work. Your employer is also responsible for making sure the procedures are followed by everyone.

The law says every worker has to have information and training about chemicals or hazardous materials in the workplace. The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulation says that you need to receive information and instruction on how to use, store and get rid of hazardous materials safely. This information is available on warning labels and information sheets.

If your job involves using equipment, your employer and supervisor must instruct you on how to operate that equipment safely. One way to get information on the safe use of machinery is from the operator's manual. It tells you about hazards and has instructions on how to use the equipment safely. Your employer should make sure anyone can check the manual if they need information. If there is no manual available for the equipment you are using, you should ask your supervisor for information on how operate the equipment safely.

Another important way that you can learn about hazards is through training. Sometimes your employer will give you the training at your workplace; sometimes you will be sent somewhere else for training. Your employer also has to tell you how and where to get first aid, and what to do in an emergency.

In a safe and healthy workplace, everyone knows about hazards. **If you see a hazard on the job or a "close call", report it to your supervisor or employer right away.** That way, someone who knows how to fix it can deal with it so that no one gets hurt. "Prevention Starts Here" when everyone knows about hazards.

Step 3: Get involved

Working together for safety

Understanding the Occupational Health and Safety Act is all about knowing the health and safety duties of employers, supervisors and the duties and rights of workers, and putting them into action. We all have to get involved.

If an employer knows about a hazard and doesn't try to eliminate or reduce it, or make sure the workers are told about it and how to deal with it, that employer is not doing what the law requires.

If a supervisor knows about a hazard and doesn't explain to the workers how to deal with it, that supervisor is not doing what the law requires.

If a worker knows about a hazard and doesn't report it to the supervisor or the employer, that worker is not doing what the law requires.

If you see a hazard on the job, you have a duty to speak up. This includes reporting equipment that isn't working right, and any other hazards that may be present as a result of not following the OHS Act or Regulations. It's important that you report to your supervisor or employer any injury, incident or close call, so that they can prevent those kinds of things from happening again in the future.

The right to participate in health and safety

The OHS Act gives you the right to participate and get involved in keeping your workplace safe and healthy. There are many ways you can do this. Can you think of three?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Here are four good ways to get involved in keeping your workplace safe, but there are many more:

1. You can ask questions when you're not sure about something.
2. You can volunteer to become a worker health and safety representative or a worker member of the joint health and safety committee.
3. You can help your health and safety representative or joint health and safety committee with health and safety inspections by pointing out possible hazards in your work area.
4. You can take your health and safety training seriously and put what you learn into practice in your job.

Health and safety representatives and joint health and safety committees

The OHS Act says that workplaces with 6 to 19 workers need to have a health and safety representative or a joint health and safety committee. In most larger workplaces with 20 or more workers, the OHS Act says a joint health and safety committee has to be set up. **Committees have to have at least two people on them; the workers or their union, if any, pick one of them and the employer picks the other.** In workplaces where there are 50 or more workers, the committee must have at least four members, and at least half of the members have to represent workers.

The committee plays an important role in helping to keep workplaces safe. For example, a member of the committee who represents workers must regularly inspect the workplace. Information from these inspections is brought back to the committee. The committee then makes recommendations to the employer to improve health and safety. The employer has to respond to these recommendations within a short period of time. Because there is an employer and a worker member of the committee, everyone has a say in identifying and solving problems.

In smaller workplaces, the health and safety representative has many of the same roles as a committee. They help to improve health and safety at work. They do this by inspecting the workplace often. If they find a problem, they make recommendations to the employer about how to fix it.

What to look for and what to ask

The OSHA says that your employer must post the OSHA and other health and safety information in your workplace, such as an occupational health and safety poster. Look for the posted names of your health and safety representative or joint health and safety committee members – these are people you can talk to if you need help. And if your workplace has more than 5 workers, your employer has to post the company health and safety policy.

If you can't find any of this information in your workplace, talk to your supervisor about it. Health and safety is an important part of his or her job. You can also talk to the people you work with and benefit from each other's experience.

Always be on the lookout for hazards to yourself or others. Before you start your work day, ask yourself questions like:

- Is any of the machinery broken?
- Are there warning labels or signs?
- Is there any moving equipment I could get caught in?
- Is there something I could slip or trip on?
- Do I need protective equipment?
- Do I know how to do this job safely?

Can you think of any other questions to ask yourself? Here are a couple of examples.

Try to list a few more.

- Is there another worker nearby who could get hurt by what I'm doing?
- Is this task more than I can physically handle?

➤ _____

➤ _____

➤ _____

These are good questions for everyone in the workplace to ask. Prevention starts here, by paying attention to details and by following the OSHA and the workplace health and safety procedures.

Be a safety role model

Most workers should be able to look to their supervisors as good health and safety role models. But others may also be looking to you as a role model for good health and safety practices.

How you work, and the way you think and talk about the work, can affect the safety of the people you work with. The message you want others to get from you is: "Prevention starts here."

Step 4: Get More Help

You are not alone

It's a sad fact that in some workplaces, nobody pays much attention to safety. In those workplaces, it's all about doing the work as quickly as possible. If someone questions the way things are being done, they may get a dirty look but nothing is done to make things safer. People in workplaces like that are often afraid to do anything about it because they don't want to get fired. So they keep quiet.

Maybe you felt that way on a past job. That's why it's important to know that you are not alone. Help is always available from outside the workplace.

If you see something unsafe that could hurt someone, you need to report it to your supervisor or your employer. It's also a good idea to tell your health and safety representative or committee if there is one. But if the employer or supervisor doesn't fix the problem, you can call the Ministry of Labour. **The Ministry's job is to help prevent workplace injuries and illnesses through enforcing the OHSA.** They want to know if there are problems that aren't being fixed.

Ministry of Labour inspectors can't be in all workplaces at all times. But the Ministry wants to hear if there's a problem on the job that isn't fixed anywhere in Ontario. So it has a toll-free number that you can call. Calling that number connects you to the Health and Safety Contact Centre that takes calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you don't want to give your name when you call the Health and Safety Contact Centre, you don't have to. Here is the number:

1-877-202-0008

Remember we mentioned reprisals before? It's against the law for your employer or your supervisor to fire or punish you for doing what the OHSA expects you to do, or because you asked them to do what the OHSA expects them to do. It's even against the law for your employer or supervisor to *threaten* to fire or punish you for these things. The OHSA is very clear on this.

If you feel that your employer is taking action against you for raising a health and safety concern, you can discuss it with a union official if you are a member of a union, or bring a complaint to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. If you're not sure what to do, you can call the Ministry's toll-free number for information. **The Office of the Worker Adviser also provides free advice and representation to non-unionized workers who are in this situation.** You can call their toll-free number for help: 1-855-659-7744.

The right to refuse unsafe work

If you have reason to believe that the work you are doing or the equipment you are using might hurt you or someone you work with, you can refuse to do that work. This means that you tell your employer or supervisor (and your health and safety representative or committee) that you think you are in danger and you are not going to do the work. You need to tell them why.

All workers have the right to refuse work if they have reason to believe it's dangerous.

It's important to know that you can also refuse work if you have reason to believe that the area where you are working is likely to endanger you or any other worker, or that you are in danger from workplace violence.

You must report the situation to your supervisor or employer, and should also contact your health and safety representative or committee. Most of the time, your supervisor or employer and your safety representative or committee member will be able to solve the problem. If the problem isn't fixed or you still have reason to believe the work is unsafe, you can continue to refuse the work. A Ministry of Labour inspector will then be called in to investigate.

Some workers, such as nurses, firefighters and police officers cannot refuse work if the danger is a normal part of their job or if refusing work would put someone else in danger. Talk to your union, other workplace representatives, supervisor or employer if you think your right to refuse work may be limited by the work you do.

More information and resources

Ontario has a health and safety “system” which includes the following partners:

Ministry of Labour

Develops, communicates and enforces occupational health and safety requirements and employment standards. Develops, coordinates and implements strategies to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses and can set standards for health and safety training.

1-877-202-0008

<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca>

Workers Health & Safety Centre

An occupational health and safety training centre for workers, representatives and employers.

1-888-869-7950

<http://www.whsc.on.ca>

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

Six medical clinics located across Ontario that provide occupational health services and information.

1-877-817-0336

<http://www.ohcow.on.ca>

Health and Safety Associations

Four health and safety associations that provide sector specific consulting, training, products and services.

- **Infrastructure Health and Safety Association** – serves electrical, construction and transportation sectors. 1-800-263-5024
- **Public Services Health and Safety Association** – serves health, education and municipal sectors. 1-877-250-7444
- **Workplace Safety North** – serves mining, pulp and paper and forestry sectors. 1-888-730-7821
- **Workplace Safety and Prevention Services** – serves industrial, farming and service sectors. 1-877-494-9777

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Administers Ontario's no-fault workplace insurance for employers and their workers.

1-800-387-0750

www.wsib.on.ca

The system is there to serve everyone in the workplace – employers, supervisors and workers.

Another place you can go for information is the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. They have information and fact sheets on their website. If you are having trouble finding information, you can ask questions by telephone at 1-800-668-4284 or through their website at www.ccohs.ca.

“Prevention Starts Here,” but it doesn’t end here.

To help you understand how Ontario’s workplace health and safety system works together to help create healthier and safer workplaces, try to match the following list of organizations to their purpose. (The answers are in the back of the workbook, but please don’t look at them ahead of time)

ORGANIZATION

- A.** Ministry of Labour
- B.** Health and Safety Associations
- C.** Workplace Safety and Insurance Board
- D.** Workers Health and Safety Centre
- E.** Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

PURPOSE

- Health and safety training
- Enforces the OHSA
- Medical clinics for injured or sick workers
- Insurance benefits for injured or sick workers
- Occupational health and safety consulting, training, products and services

What's next?

Now that you have completed this general awareness program, you are ready to be given more specific information and instruction by your employer and supervisor as required by the OHSA. You should hear about:

- ✓ Specific hazards in your workplace
- ✓ The procedure to follow when reporting health and safety concerns, incidents or injuries
- ✓ Any protective equipment you are required to wear or use
- ✓ Where the company's health and safety policy is posted (in workplaces with more than 5 workers)
- ✓ Where the first aid station is and the names of qualified first aid providers
- ✓ The company's emergency plan
- ✓ Information on hazardous materials in your workplace
- ✓ The workplace violence and harassment prevention policy
- ✓ Where a copy of the OHSA is posted
- ✓ Where the names of your joint health and safety committee members are posted

We hope this program has been useful and that you'll use the information in your day-to-day work. Knowing your health and safety rights and duties, and the duties of your supervisor and employer, is an important first step in staying safe on the job.

Remember that when it comes to your health and safety, there is no such thing as a silly question. That question could save your life – so ask it.